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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined school-based management and shared decision-making processes (SBDM) in Chapter 1 and non-Chapter 1 elementary schools are presented in this paper. Methodology involved analysis of recent literature on SBDM, though Chapter 1 status as a variable was not specifically addressed. Three differences were found to distinguish Chapter 1-eligible schools and those that were ineligible. The Chapter 1 schools had more funds than they could work with, less risk-averse governance councils, and staff who were more experienced and comfortable with participative decision making. (LMI)

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Similarities In and Differences Between Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1 Elementary Schools' Adoption of School Based Management/Shared Decision Making.

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Similarities In and Differences Between Chapter 1 and Non-Chapter 1 Elementary Schools' Adoption of School Based Management/Shared Decision Making.

Introduction

We examined school based management/shared decision making (SBDM) in two groups of elementary schools. One group was made up of schools which were eligible for financial support through Chapter 1 and the other group included schools which were not eligible for this funding source. Our findings should assist educators who are considering this administrative procedure in their schools.

Our first step was to examine the literature in order to determine the range of SBDM currently and how our schools would fit the models we found. The literature on the topic is extensive and we had to limit our review to the research we felt was most relevant to our interests. We encountered no research which addressed the issue we examined - Chapter 1 status as a variable - and had to look at the material closely in order to extract pertinent information.

Research

An administrator's regard for leadership and teacher empowerment, two components of SBDM, is situational according to Lucas, Brown and Marcus (1991). The writers found that an administrator's willingness to share his/her autonomy is critical to empowering teachers and implementing SBDM. In one mode, school administrators believe they have little autonomy which has been achieved at a great cost. In another mode, they believe they have no autonomy and cannot use novel administrative procedures.

Lucas, Brown and Marcus used a questionnaire in order to collect their data and found that school administrators were more willing to permit empowerment for instructional strategies and issues surrounding subject matter as opposed to financial options and other resources. The writers pointed out that control over curriculum can be reclaimed but control over money cannot. Generally, the degree to which school administrators share their decision-making power is based on their discretion.

A principal who is willing to share the decision-making role in a school builds upon teachers' strengths by improving relationships (Barth, 1990). Yet, the literature reveals some skepticism in the studies on schooling.

> It is unthinkable that any other profession undergoing close scrutiny by so many would find description and

> analysis of practice, and prescriptions for improving practice, coming largely from outsiders looking in. Where are the voices of the insiders looking in? (p. 28)

Barth sees schools as porous entities. Consequently, control should not be solely in the hands of educators. Communities and organizations have legitimate roles to play in a school's operations. Barth limited his discussion to the political and economic forces which act on democratic activities in the workplace. He did not deal with specific management procedures.

Hutchler and Duttweiler (1990) addressed risk taking in their paper. The researchers found that individuals may not express their ideas because they may be afraid of alienating someone. In time, teachers were encouraged to take risks. Money, of course, is a critical component of school reform efforts. Funds have to be assigned to staff development. Staff development, in turn, should focus on attitudinal change and learning skills.

Administrators received grants from foundations, the local school district and the University of Toledo to underwrite Project SHAPE (Scott High School Accelerated Program in Education). Kretovics, Farber and Armaline (1991) reported that a task force made up of representatives from interested groups prepared a restructuring plan.designed to improve student achievement by empowering teachers and administrators at the school. Members of the task force identified students' problems and took steps to deal with them. The researchers described the activities carried out under the plan, "to provide a framework within which teachers could develop an academically accelerated curriculum for educationally disadvantaged students and transform the educational delivery system in order to link curriculum materials to the experiences that inner city students bring to the classroom" (p 296).

Porter found that the key to change in school structure lay in the principal (1991). The principal is responsible for creating an environment where the lines of communication and decision-making can be established. Fields (1991) uncovered a positive relationship between teachers involvement in decision-making and student performance while Turnage (1991) found a positive relationship between decision-making and morale.

Roemer examined school reform through a collaborative effort between school and university faculty members designed to implement an assessment program in English (1991). This assessment program was based on the use of writing portfolios.

School reform is a complex matter according to Roemer and the process of reform is as crucial to success as the specific measures themselves. Roemer demonstrated how the participants understood change and its process in strikingly different ways. The results of their efforts were perceived as successful by some members of the collaborative and unsuccessful by others despite their common purpose.

White Plains, New York, has a student population of approximately 5,000 (Yankofsky and Young, 1992). While most of the students come from upper and middle class homes, some live in subsidized housing and hotels for the homeless. A small percentage of the students have limited proficiency in English.

Policy makers restructured the district in 1988 in order to improve services. The restructuring plan included five components. First, the planners established SBDM in its five elementary schools in order to create distinctive educational programs in each. Second, the planners took steps to insure that the central office would commit itself to supporting SBDM. Third, administrators addressed the issues of racial and ethnic balance. Fourth, the district's leaders prepared new student assignment plans and, finally, reconfigured the schools' organizational patterns.

In 1989, individual school leadership councils were formed. These councils had to develop a theme or group of interests for their schools. Parents, teachers, administrators and nonteaching personnel joined the councils which "have grown increasingly bold in departing from established norms and patterns" (p. 77). Through their actions, the councils developed schools with distinct emphases including partnerships, active learning, global education, communication, science and technology.

Yanofsky and Young claimed that the school staffs were forced to become thoughtful and articulate about what they represent and what is important. Parents learned how to examine educational issues and identify important components in their children's schools. The process encouraged positive relationships among all those concerned with the schools, encouraged involvement and left no individual or group with an excessive burden.

Summary

We found three differences between our Chapter 1 eligible schools and those which were not eligible for this support. First, the Chapter 1 schools had more funds they could work with. Second, the governance councils in the Chapter 1 schools were more willing to take risks in order to improve their educational programs. Third, the Chapter 1 school personnel were more experienced in making decisions

and seemed to feel comfortable in working through the process.

Funding may influence these differences through other avenues. Schools which are eligible for Chapter 1 support allocate funding for staff development activities in areas other than SBDM. These activities in terms of number, depth and variety may serve as preparation for participation in SBDM programs. As a result, the Chapter 1 eligible school participants come to SBDM with more experience . Since the level of funding is limited in both types of schools based on Chapter 1 eligibility, negotiations involving groups and individuals at differing levels are inevitable. Clearly, Chapter 1 eligible school participants have had more opportunities to hone their skills in negotiation, skills which may lead to more efficient decision-making.

By definition, Chapter 1 schools receive more discretionary funds than schools which are not eligible for this supplementary allotment. Schools which select Schoolwide Projects status acquire additional support. Therefore, councils in these schools are able to underwrite costs which their counterparts in non-Chapter 1 schools cannot. As a result, positions may be supported, materials and supplies may be purchased and extracurricular programs may be funded through this additional allocation. Or, Chapter 1 eligible school councils can work with more financial resources than those in non-Chapter 1 settings.

Along the same line, student bodies in Chapter 1 schools have lower achievement scores than those in non-Chapter 1 schools. Councils in non-Chapter 1 schools may be unwilling to consider strategies which would imperil their achievement status. Consider a new approach in language arts or mathematics which emphasizes points which are not fully considered by standardized tests. Since the students may be learning something other than that which is measured, a council may not be willing to take a risk which could lead to a decrease in performance. Since there is much more to gain in a Chapter 1 setting, these councils seemed to be willing to take such risks.

Our observations indicated that governance council members in Chapter 1 schools seemed to be more comfortable in making decisions. During the decision making procedures, the Chapter 1 school council members were more active during the discussions. Their comments were original rather than supportive and opened novel lines of inquiry while their counterparts tended to support positions which had been previously opened. When discussion lagged, the non-Chapter 1 councils tended to look to the principal for guidance or leadership. In the Chapter 1 meetings, the principal did not receive the same attention. These observations could have

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been specific to the schools involved and additional study may be called for in order to verify this point.

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